

OCCASIONAL NOTES.

L A T A .

THE following extract will be of great interest to those who have read Mr. O'BRIEN's paper on this subject in No. 11 of this Journal.—ED.

“ The first thing of interest to attract me within a few hours of my arrival at Kosala, was a case in one of the servants of the house of that curious cerebral affection called by the natives *lata*. It is of a hysterical nature, and is confined chiefly to women, although I have also seen a man affected by it. On being startled, or excited suddenly, the person becomes *lata*, losing the control of her will, and cannot refrain from imitating whatever she may hear or see done, and will keep calling out, as long as the fit lasts, the name—and generally that word alone—of whatever has flashed through her mind as the cause of it. “He-ih-heh matjan!” (tiger); “He-ih-heh boorung besar!” (a great bird). Her purpose will be arrested, as, if walking, she will stop short, and on going on again will often follow some other course. The prefatory exclamation is an invariable symptom, seemingly caused by involuntary hysterical inspirations. According to the degree of alarm the symptoms may remain only a few moments, or last for the greater part of a day, especially if the patient be prevented from calming down. The afflicted, if not very seriously affected, are not altogether incapacitated from performing the duties to which they are accustomed. The most curious characteristic of the disease is their imitation of every action they see. On one occasion, while eating a banana, I suddenly met this servant with a piece of soap in her hand: and, perceiving she was slightly *lata*, but without appearing to take any notice of her, I made a vigorous bite at the fruit in passing her, an action she instantly repeated on the piece of soap. On another

occasion, while she was looking on as I placed some plants in drying paper, not knowing that caterpillars were objects of supreme abhorrence to the natives, I flicked off in a humorous way on to her dress one that happened to be on a leaf; she was instantly intensely *lata*, and throwing off all her clothing, she made off like a chased deer along the mountain road, repeating the word for caterpillar as she ran, until compelled by exhaustion to stop, when the spasm gradually left her. My own "boy," who would unconcernedly seize all sorts of snakes in his hands, became one day *lata* also, on suddenly touching a large caterpillar. My host's maid once, while alone at some distance from the house, having come unexpectedly on a large lizard—the Baiawak—was seized by a paroxysm; dropping down on her hands and knees to imitate the reptile, she thus followed it through mud, water and mire to the tree in which it took refuge, where she was arrested and came to herself. Another case which came under my knowledge was more tragic in its results. This woman, startled by treading in a field on one of the most venomous snakes in Java, became so *lata* that she vibrated her finger in imitation of the tongue of the reptile in front of its head till the irritated snake struck her; and the poor creature died within an hour.

During the attack the eyes have a slightly unnatural stare, but there is never a total loss of consciousness, and throughout the paroxysm the patient is wishful to get away from the object affecting her, yet is without the strength of will to escape, or to cease acting in the way I have described. *Lata* persons are constantly teased by their fellows, and are often kept in an excited state for whole days."—*A Naturalist's Wanderings in the Eastern Archipelago*. FORBES, 1885.

THE following paragraph appears in the report of a meeting of the *Société de Géographie*, Paris, held on the 22nd May, 1885:—

"Le Président annonce la présence à la séance de MM. MAXWELL. M. WILLIAM MAXWELL, ancien Assistant-Résident de Pérak, aujourd'hui l'un

des hauts fonctionnaires du gouvernement de Singapore, a toujours fait le meilleur accueil aux voyageurs français; aussi la Société de Géographie saisit-elle avec empressement cette occasion de l'en remercier.

M. MAXWELL est en même temps l'éminent secrétaire de la branche malaise de la Société royale asiatique. Tous ceux qui s'occupent de la Malaisie savent l'énergie, l'activité et le talent qu'il a mis au service de la science. Son pays, d'ailleurs, a su reconnaître les services rendus par lui, et, aujourd'hui même, M. MAXWELL vient d'en recevoir la récompense: l'ordre de Saint-Michel et Saint-George. La Société de Géographie est heureuse d'être la première à l'en féliciter.

M. FRANK MAXWELL, son frère, l'un des résidents de Sarawak, nous arrive en droite ligne de Bornéo, où il vient de séjourner pendant treize années, dont la plus grande partie a été vaillamment passée à l'intérieur du pays, dans des régions inconnues, au milieu des Dayaks, dont il a étudié le caractère et les mœurs.

Les noms des deux frères appartiennent donc à la Géographie et la Société leur souhaite une cordiale bienvenue."

M. DE QUATREFAGES has been good enough to present to the Society, through M. DE LA CROIX, a copy of his work "*Hommes fossiles et hommes sauvages*," Paris, 1884.